

AN UPRISING AT KARKAR: A NEW HISTORICAL-LITERARY TEXT

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Abstract

This paper offers a new edition of the Middle Babylonian bilingual fragment VS 17, 43 (VAT 1514) together with the duplicate lines found on the obverse of the Kassite period exercise tablet CBS 7884. The text is of historical-literary content and depicts an otherwise unknown uprising at Karkar. A first edition of the text is offered together with a brief introduction regarding its problematic historical setting.

Introduction¹

1. The Sources

The Middle Babylonian bilingual fragment VAT 1514 published in copy by van Dijk as VS 17, 43, who already recognized its historical-literary content (van Dijk 1971: 12), has been misunderstood in recent decades by several scholars as an incantation.² Although not much is preserved of the tablet, it is a welcome addition to the bilingual literary corpus of this period (see Zomer 2018: 125–42).³

A Nippur duplicate to VS 17, 43: 3'–5' was identified by Miguel Civil (2004: 102) on the obverse of the Kassite pillow-shaped exercise tablet CBS 7884, whereas the reverse contained an extract of the lexical list DIRI (*MSL* 15, 102).⁴ Unfortunately, CBS 7884 has disappeared from the University of Pennsylvania Museum.⁵ Thanks to Civil, who kindly sent me his copy (fig. 3) and a photo (fig. 4) of the obverse of CBS 7884, this text is included here as manuscript B.

Both VS 17, 43 and CBS 7884 are said to be of Middle Babylonian date (Van Dijk 1971: 12; Civil 2004: 102; Sassmannshausen 2008: 272; Veldhuis 2014: 255–56; Viano 2016: 36; Bartelmus 2016: 67). Whereas VS 17, 43 is a bilingual of the interlinear format (Zomer 2018: 131–31), the obverse of CBS 7884 is unilingual

1. I am grateful to Enrique Jiménez, Nils Heeßel, Nathan Wasserman, and the anonymous reviewers for reading and commenting on earlier versions of this paper. Any mistakes remaining in are, of course, mine alone. Additionally, I also must thank Olaf M. Teßmer for taking the photographs in fig. 2 and to the Vorderasiatische Museum in Berlin for permission to publish them here and the late Miguel Civil, who generously shared his old copy and photo of the obverse of CBS 7884 and gave his permission to include them here. This is published here by kind permission of Steve Tinney, chief curator, Penn Museum, Philadelphia.

2. Sassmannshausen 2008: 272, Hess 2012, *Anhang A.6 and Viano 2016: 36, without any further argumentation.

3. For an overview of the entire early Akkadian literary corpus, see *Sources of Early Akkadian Literature* (SEAL) <http://www.seal.uni-leipzig.de/> under supervision of M. P. Streck and N. Wasserman.

4. For discussions of Kassite period pillow-shaped exercise tablets, see Veldhuis 2000; Sassmannshausen 2002; and Bartelmus 2016.

5. Veldhuis 2014: 255 n. 565. This was kindly confirmed in personal communication by Grant Frame (January 2018).

Sumerian. As for the provenience, CBS 7884 comes from Nippur (Civil 2004: 102), but the origin of VS 17, 43 is unknown (Van Dijk 1971: 8–9).

2. Language

Although not much is preserved of the text, its use of arcane learned Sumerian is noteworthy. Of particular interest are the scholarly expressions *lugal imin* for *šar kiššati(m)* (l. 1) and $\text{ĝeš} \text{ĝešnimbar}$ for *šarru(m)* (l. 7) mainly known from lexical lists; see commentary below. As such, this text reminds us of other compositions of the second millennium BCE such as the OB *The Scholars of Uruk* (George 2009: 78–83) and the MB *Kurigalzu's Statue Inscription* (see Veldhuis 2008), which provide evidence for the use of lexical lists for composing Sumerian. The fact that CBS 7884 was written on a tablet that also contained a lexical extract strengthens this assumption.

3. Identification and Historical Setting

It is evident that van Dijk was correct that VS 17, 43 // CBS 7884 is most likely a historical-literary text rather than an incantation. The text mentions an uprising of troops at the city of Karkar (written IM^{ki})⁶ that subsequently deposed four kings (ll. 2–3).⁷

Another interesting feature is the occurrence of the geographical entity Emutbalum (l. 18'), which implies that the historical narrative of this text was set in the Old Babylonian period (Stol 1976: 71). If this is correct, one may tentatively think of the reign of Samsuiluna, which was marked by various uprisings.⁸ The allusion in our text to the Emutbalum and the chaotic events occurring at Karkar and Nippur together with the reference to Uruk would suggest Rīm-Sin II (Larsa-Emutbalum), Rīm-Anum (Uruk), and Ilima-ilum (Nippur) as potential protagonists but these matters are fraught with difficulties.

The reference to the city of Karkar and its leader, who is not defined as king in the text, may be explained by the fact that Karkar never appears during the Old Babylonian period as an independent polity but was alternatively dominated by the city-states of Babylon (Hammurapi) and Larsa (Rīm-Sin II) since both mention their involvement in the local cult of Adad.⁹

Another problem is the use of *lugal imin*, a scholarly expression for *šar kiššati*, “King of the World,” a matter that is discussed below. The kings of the First Dynasty of Babylon did not use the title *šar kiššati*;¹⁰ this is first used in Babylonia starting the reign of the Kassite kings¹¹ and appears to be never used in retrospect to designate Old Babylonian rulers.

This means that we have to assume post-OB scholarly enhancement and that the historical narrative of the text was set in a different period leaving us with the possibility that this composition belongs to the

6. Note that there are three toponyms written IM^{ki}, i.e., Ennegi, Murum, and Karkar(a); see Renger 1970. For further discussion on the location and identification of Karkar, see Powell 1980 and Steinkeller 2001. The preference for Karkar in the present context derives from its relative proximity to Nippur and its strategic importance in the Old Babylonian period.

7. Note that Bartelmus 2016: 67 follows van Dijk's interpretation, but misreads $\text{erin}_2\text{-hi-a}$ // ERIN₂.MEŠ as $\text{u}_4\text{-hi-a}$ // UD.MEŠ in VS 17, 43: 3'–5'.

8. For studies on the rebellions during the reign of Samsuiluna, see Charpin 2001 (Ešnunna and Mutiabal), Ormsby 1972: 91 and Stol 1976: 44–58 (Rīm-Sin in Larsa), Seri 2013 (Rīm-Anum in Uruk), Stol 1976: 56 and Boivin 2018: 86–95 (Ilima-ilum in Nippur).

9. For Hammurapi, see the prologue of the Code of Hammurapi iii 55–64 in Roth 1997: 79; for Rīm-Sin, see year-name (RS 12) in Stol 1976: 20. For an elaborate discussion on the history of Karkar as a cult place of Iškur/Adad, see Schwemer 2001: 136–40.

10. Seux 1967: 310–12. Note that the Old Babylonian northern kings Ešnunna (Ipiq-Adad II, see RIME 4 E4.5.14.4; E4.5.14.2002; Narām-Sîn, see JCS 13: 76) and Šamši-Addu I, see Seux 1967: 308.

11. For the use of the title *šar kiššati* during the Kassite period, see Brinkman 1976: 405 n. 32.

corpus of legends of the kings of Akkade. Rulers of Uruk and Nippur are mentioned in the Great Revolt against Narām-Sin (J. Westenholz 1997: 244–45, lines 36, 38). The title *šar kiššati* (LUGAL KIŠ), “King of the World,” an important ideological modification of the older “King of Kiš” was adopted by Sargon and was continued by his successors (A. Westenholz 1999: 37 n. 109). The occurrence of Emutbalum in such a context may find a parallel in the first millennium copy of the Sargon Geography (KAV 92) (Horowitz 1998: 67–95; q.v. 70 line 25) where the country of Emutbalum is listed in a description of the great king’s realm (Stol 1976: 64). Moreover, the fact that one manuscript (B) of the text was written on an exercise tablet and therefore belongs to a curricular context finds parallels with the legends of the Akkade kings.¹²

In conclusion, it cannot be established with any certainty to which king or period this enigmatic narrative can be attributed. Perhaps the edition of these fragments will prompt more duplicates to come to light, enabling more precise identification of this composition.

Edition

Since the copy given in VS 17, 43 is in need of revision, a new autograph of the tablet is presented here together with photographs that are reproduced courtesy of the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin. As said above, the tablet CBS 7884 is currently lost in the Penn Museum in Philadelphia, therefore a hand copy and a photo of the obverse, generously provided by the late Miguel Civil, are presented here as well.

Manuscripts

- A = VS 17, 43 (VAT 1514), figs. 1 and 2
Measurements 80 × 65 mm
B = CBS 7884, figs. 3 and 4
Measurements 49 × 68 mm

Transliteration

- 1
A: 1' 'lugal[?] imin x x x x x x x' []
A: 2' 'LUGAL' IMIN 'li x x' ša id-'ki' iZ Zi₂ 'x' []

2
A: 3' 1 me-at erin₂-hi-a ša₃ Karkar(IM)^{ki}-ta []
B: 1 1 me^{ma-at} erin₂-hi-a ša₃ <Karkar(IM)>^{ki}-ta im-ta-e-de₃
A: 4' me-at ERIN₂.MEŠ iš-t[u[?]] li-ib-bu []

12. I.e., Oakk.: *Afo* 25, 97 (J. Westenholz 1997: 224–29); OB: VS 24, 75 (J. Westenholz 1997: 52–55); MB: EA 375 (J. Westenholz 1997: 132–33); NB: *OECT* 11, 103 (J. Westenholz 1997: 294–368). Noteworthy are the Akkadian prisms *KBo* 19.98 and *KBo* 19.99 (J. Westenholz 1997: 280–93) found in Hattuša, which derive from an educational context as well denoting the Mesopotamian curriculum used at the Hittite court. In this regard, the catch line found on the prism *KBo* 1.18, which is a scribal exercise containing Sumerian and Akkadian incantations, reading LUGAL ŠU₂ (*šar kiššati*) is to be taken into consideration most likely denoting another legend of Akkade kings; see Zomer in press, with previous literature.

3

A: 5' a₂-kal-kil₃ erin₂-hi-a nig₂ 4 lugal-e-ne s[ag₂]B: 2-4 a₂-kal-kil₃^{li} erin₂-hi-a / nig₂ 4 lugal-e-ne zag mi-^rsig₅^r-eš-a / ša₃ nibru^{ki}-ke₄
mu-sar-re-eš-aA: 6' gi-pi₂-iš ERIN₂.MEŠ ^rša^r 4 šar-ra-ni is-ki-p[u]

4

A: 7' mu Karkar(IM)^{ki}-ke₄ ^rĝir₂^r Karkar(IM)^{ki} ^rx' []

5

A: 8' i₃-ne-eš₂ ^{d+}en-lil₂-le nibru^{ki} e₂-meš KA ^rx' []A: 9' ^ri^r-na-an-na ^rd⁺EN.LIL₂ LUGAL^r NIBRU^{ki} []

6

A: 10' (x-)^rx-e^r-a bala []

7

A: 11' [] ^rx x' ^{ĝeš}ĝešnimbar nibru^{ki}-ke₄ []A: 12' [] ^ĝ^{eš}ĜEŠNIMBAR NIBRU^{ki} []

8

A: 13' [] ^rizi^r-ĝar ^rx' []

9'

A: r. 1' [] []

10'

A: r. 2' [] ^ra^r-bi ^rniĝ₂ mu-im-ma^r kala[m]A: r. 3' [] ^rx' ša-ad-da-ag-dam x []A: r. 4' [] ^rx' ana ŠA₃ ma-ti-šu []

11'

A: r. 5' [] []

12'

A: r. 6' [] t]a[?] ^rx ša[?] pi₂[?]-i []

13'

A: r. 7' []

14'

A: r. 8' [] ^r(x) x' ^rlu[?] ga[?] ^rx (x)' []

15'

A: r. 9' [] ^rx' pap ^rlu[?] tu[?] []

- 16'
A: r. 10' [] 'za'-e-me-en unug^{ki} []
- 17'
A: r. 11' [(niĝ₂)-mu]-pad₃-da-zu []
- 18'
A: r. 12' [] 'a₂'-tah E-mu-ut-ba-lu[m]

Translation

¹ ... The king of the world ... mobilized ... ² A hundred troops came forth from the midst of Karkar. ³ A mass of troops that deposed four kings (and) chased them (away) to the midst of Nippur. ⁴ The year that Karkar [overthrew⁷] the dagger of Karkar ... ⁵ Now Enlil [...] the king of Nippur ... (Sum. A: 8' reads: Now Enlil the houses of ...) ... ⁶ ... the reign ... ⁷ ... the date-palm of Nippur ... ⁸ ... a torch ... ⁹ ... ¹⁰ ... its water, last year four ... into his own country ... ¹¹ ... ¹² ... of the mouth(s) ... ¹³ ... too fragmentary ... ¹⁶ ... are you! Uruk ... ¹⁷ ... your fame ... ¹⁸ ... the auxiliary (troops) of the Emutbalum ...

Textual Notes

1: LUGAL IMIN is here understood for *šar kiššati*. The equation lugal imin = *šar kiššati* is known from the lexical list Lu I 52 (MSL 12, 94) with the addition of Middle Babylonian witnesses IM 58955 (Bartelmus 2016: 402), VS 24, 15 (Bartelmus 2016: 369) and Msk 74121 (Emar 6/1, 294–300).

2: The verbal form im-ta-e-de₃ (B: 1) is as an unorthographical rendering of im-ta-e₁₁-de₃.

3: The complement li (B: 2) suggests that LAGAB.LAGAB is most likely to be read as kil₃, which agrees with further lexical data for *gipšu*; see CAD G, 85a.

The verb *sakāpu* A, “to thrust, push away, overturn,” is well attested in context of deposing kings, see CAD S, 70b. The equation of *sakāpu* with sag₂ (PA.GAN) in MS. A is expected following the evidence found in lexical lists: sag₂ = sa₃-ka'-pu'-[um], OB Diri 371 (MSL 15, 24); [sag₂] = sa-ka-pu, Diri V 81 (MSL 15, 170); sag₂ = sa-ka-pu, MA Izi 12: iii 3' (CUSAS 12, 48); sag₂ (PA+GAN) = sa-k[a-pu] (CT 11, 28 iv 6). Other relevant equations for *sakāpu* are: ta-ag, tag = sà-ka-pu, A V/1 227 (MSL 14, 413); [(si-ig) = sag₃(PA) = sa-k]a-pu, A I/7 section A: i 1' (MSL 14, 236); za-ag, [zag] = [s]a-ka-pu, VAT 10185 i 12 (unpublished; see CAD S, 70a); zag-sag = sa-ka-pu, Antagal A 205 (MSL 17, 188); zag-sag₂ in gal₅-la₂ hul zag sag₂ // sa₃-kip gal-le-e lem-ni, Bīt mēseri II 202 (AfO 14, 150); [zag(?)]-sag₁₁ = [sa]-ka-pu, Erimhuš II 203 (MSL 17, 38); zag-sag₁₁ MIN (= dug₄-ga) = (CT 51, 58–60 iii 42'); zag-tag in lu₂-dingir-zag-tag-ga = is₃-ki-pu-[š]u, OB Lu A 380 (MSL 12, 169).

The fact that we now find a first attestation of the idiom as zag-sig₅/sag₁₀ in B, can be explained from the widespread conflation between tag and sag/sag₂/sag₁₁ in the evidence presented above.

4: ĝir₂ Karkar^{ki}, “the dagger of Karkar,” is interpreted here as a pejorative reference for the leading figure in Karkar. Alternatively, one may be tempted to read a defective lugal instead of ĝir₂, this is however unlikely since no references exist for any period for a “King of Karkar.”

7: We find here an alternative reference to the king of Nippur as the “date palm of Nippur.” The equation ĝešĝešnimbar, “date palm” = *šarru*, “king,” is known from the lexical tradition, e.g., Lu I 34 (MSL 12, 94) and the S^a vocabulary fragments U 18' and V 9' (MSL 3, 75–76). The literary use of the date-palm for king is known from the Babylonian disputation poems *Series of the Poplar* (II 17') and *Palm and Vine* (26'), where

the date-palm calls itself *šar iṣṣī*, “king of trees.” Another example is found in the colophon of K 2856+ iv 48 naming Sennacherib as the “date-palm of Assyria.” For an elaborate discussion on the equation of “date palm = king,” see Jiménez (2017: 37–38, 71, 193, 231, 257 n. 651, 262, 284).

8: Alternatively one may read a verbal form $bi_2-gar(-)'x'$ [...]

17': Either $mu-pad_3-da$ or $ni\hat{g}_2-mu-pad_3-da$ is to be restored here. $mu-pad_3-da = zikir \text{ } \check{s}umi$, “fame,” is known from *Erimhuš* VI 245f. (MSL 17, 88), $ni\hat{g}_2-mu-pad_3-da = zakār \text{ } \check{s}umi$ “fame” is known from *Ura* I 40 (MSL 5, 12).

18': The equation $a_2-tah = nārāru$ is well-known from lexical evidence, see CAD N₁, 346a. In this present context, a translation “auxiliary (troops)” is preferred over “help.”

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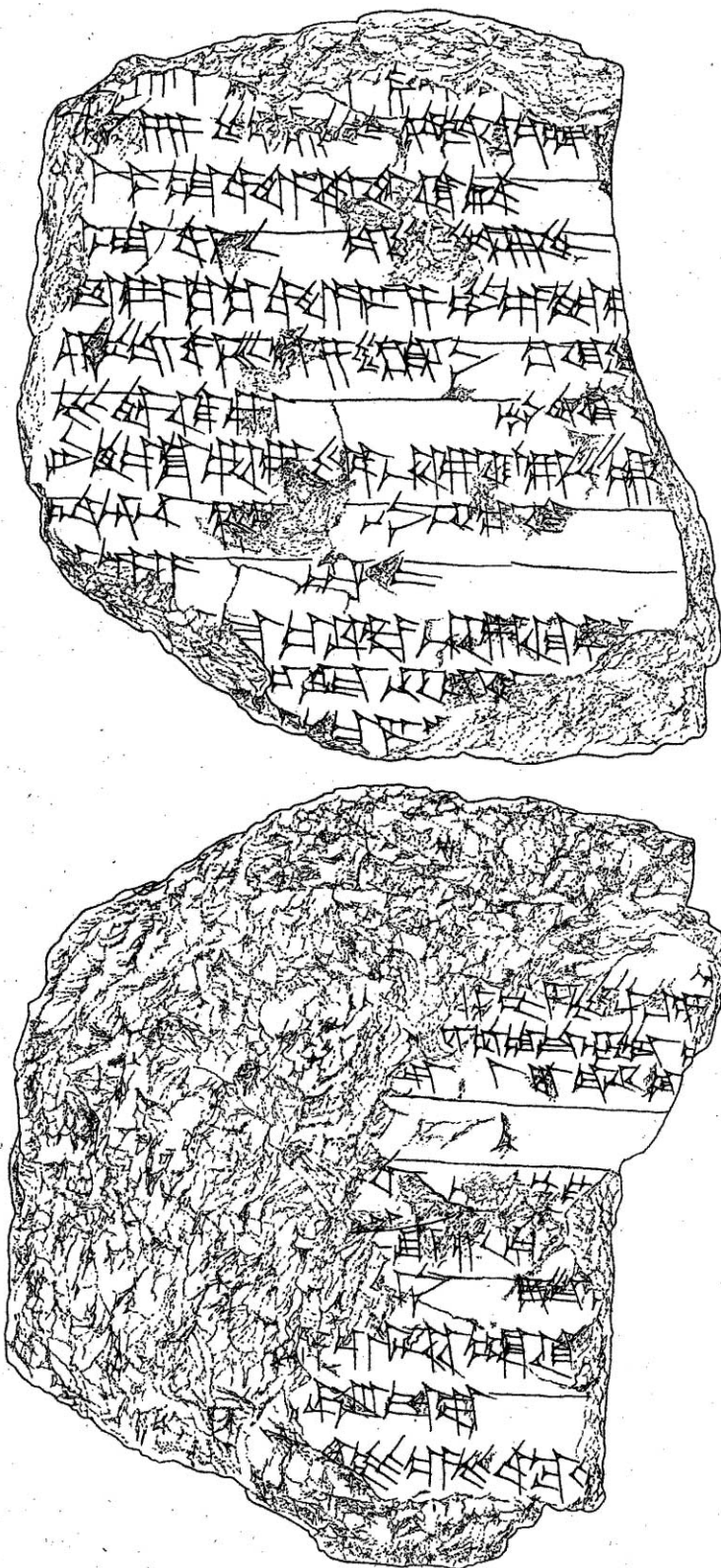


Fig 1. VAT 1514 © Elyze Zomer.

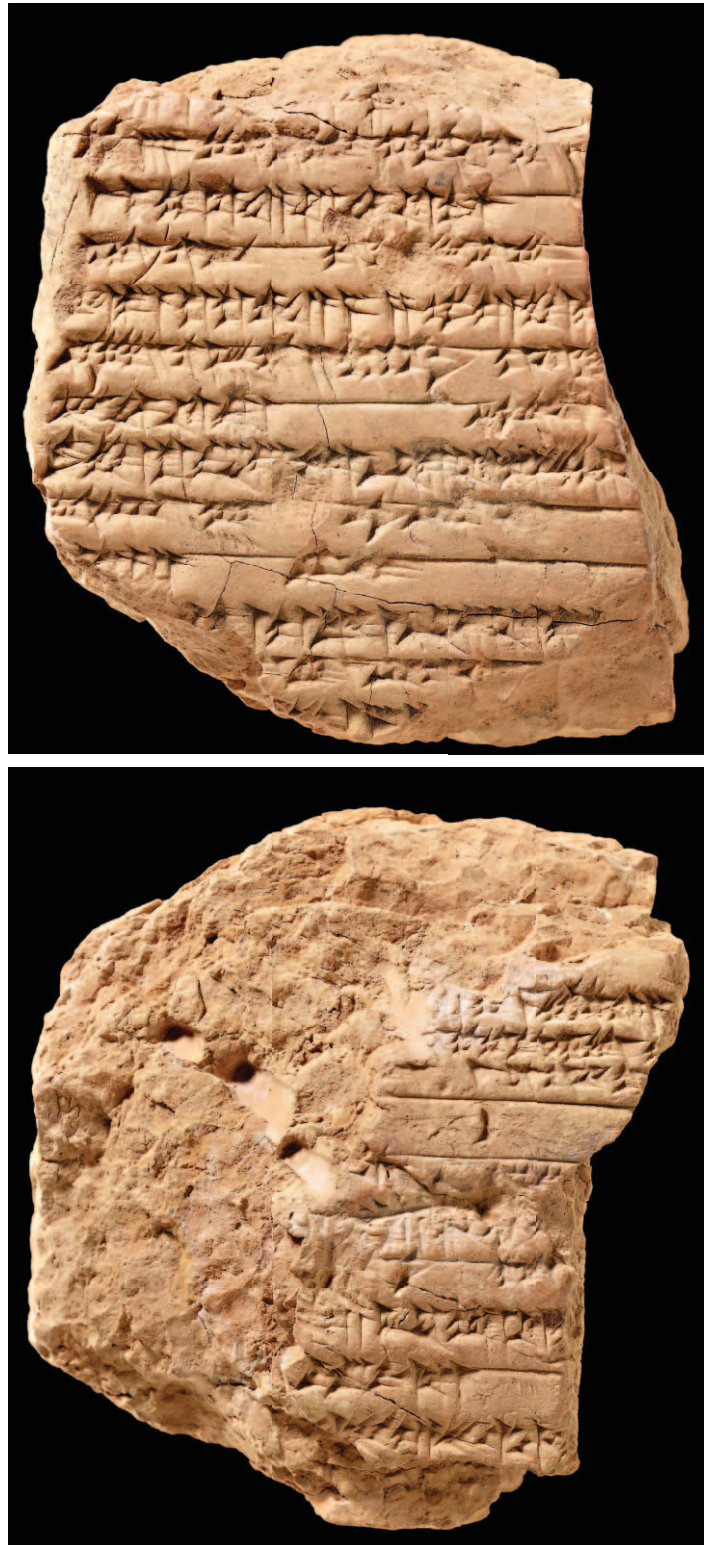


Fig 2. VAT 1514 © Olaf M. Teßmer, Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin – Vorderasiatisches Museum.

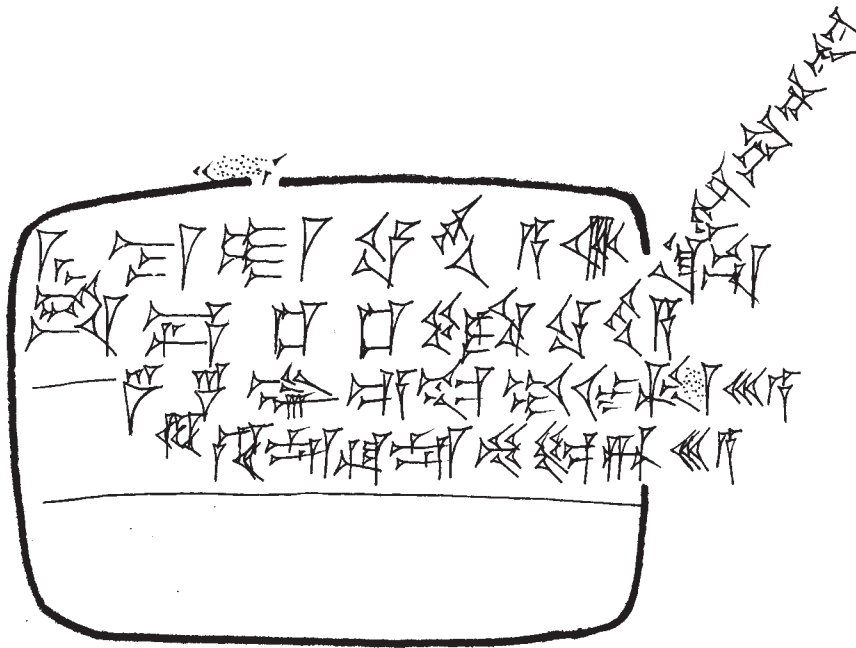


Fig 3. CBS 7884 Obverse © Miguel Civil.



Fig 4. CBS 7884 Obverse © Miguel Civil.